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Circular No. 1.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Washington, D. C., April 5, 1886.

Dear Sir:

Allow me to call your attention to the necessity for all concerned in the public welfare of giving serious thought to the growing importance of the forestry question to the country as a whole and to the individual States. I trust that the warning voices pointing out the dangers to the welfare of the country, arising from an indiscriminate destruction of forests without adequate provision for their restoration, have been heard by you, and also the suggestion that, in order to arrest the tendency to wastefulness in this particular, it is necessary to look first of all to the aid of public schools and other means of education. To show that the subject is a serious one, considered only from a material point of view, let me submit to you a few striking figures which seem to approximate the state of affairs as arrived at in the preliminary investigations carried on by this Department.

The forest area of the United States seems to be less than 450 million acres, of which more than 10 million acres yearly are destroyed by fire, and to supply the needs of fuel, ties, lumber, etc., it is estimated that certainly not less than 10 million acres are denuded, altogether an area of over 60,000 acres per diem, the product representing a value of more than \$700,000 per annum.

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Dear Sir:

The consumption of the forests in supplying our railroads with ties is enormous and increasing with the rapid extension of the roads. It is estimated that the building of existing roads has taken the available timber from an area as large as the States of Rhode Island and Connecticut, and that to keep them in repair by replacing decayed ties with new ones requires annually the yield of more than 500,000 acres.

In 1853 the forest area of Ohio was 55.27 per cent of the area of the State. In 1881 it was but 22.53 per cent. A similar rapid consumption of the forests has taken place in other States. In many cases the flow of streams has been lessened or made irregular by the removal of the forests from their vicinity. Floods and droughts have become more frequent and destructive from the same cause, and agriculture and manufactures have suffered greatly in consequence. The consumption of the forests so far exceeds their growth that, if no effective measures are taken to check the decline, the forests would entirely disappear within a hundred years. The great pine forests of the northwest will hardly last till the close of the present century.

I will only allude to the more complicated and sometimes disputed influences which the forests exert upon the agricultural and hydrological conditions of its surroundings. Your acquaintance with the history of older nations and the observations recorded on this continent will convince you that this is at least a subject which requires serious attention.

The consumption of the forests in supplying our rail-

roads with ties is enormous and increasing with the rapid ex-

haustion of the woods. It is estimated that the building of

existing roads has taken the available timber from the States

large as the States of Rhode Island and Connecticut, and that

to keep them in repair by replacing decayed ties will require

respectively annually the sale of more than 500,000 cords.

In 1883 the forest area of Ohio was 1,000,000 acres.

of the area of the State. In 1881 it was 1,000,000 acres.

A similar rapid consumption of the forests has taken place in

other States. In many cases the flow of streams has been in-

creased or made irregular by the removal of the forest trees.

Their vicinity. Floods and drouths have become more frequent

and destructive from the same cause, and agriculture is being

ruined. The forests have suffered greatly in closed areas. The consump-

tion of the forests so far exceeds their growth that, if no

effective measures are taken to check the decay, the forests

would entirely disappear within a hundred years.

Our forests of the Northwest will surely last until the middle

of the present century.

I will only allude to the more complicated and some-

times disputed influences which the forests exert upon the

agricultural and hydrological conditions of the surroundings.

Your acquaintance with the history of older nations and the ob-

servations recorded on this continent will convince you that

this is at least a subject which requires serious attention.

This Department in its Forestry Division has been charged to obtain such information as may form a basis for intelligent action, and to exert, by the diffusion of accurate knowledge on the subject and otherwise, its influence in leading to a reform in the present methods of using the forests and to secure their renewal.

This most desirable work, however, is only inadequately provided for by the appropriation given by Congress for the purpose. And the difficulty of obtaining precise and reliable information as to actual conditions and needs is great.

Knowing that there is no body of men in the country, as a class more intelligent and more capable of aiding this important work, nay more interested in it, than the educators of the coming generation, perceiving also that the two purposes of obtaining and diffusing information for which this Forestry Division was constituted are subserved at one and the same time by the following plan, I would respectfully ask your consideration and support of the same.

It is proposed--

1st. To engage the force of teachers under your superintendence upon the ascertainment of facts in regard to forest areas, their distribution, utilization, etc., in their immediate precincts.

2nd. By thus directing their attention to the subject and supplying them with such information as the Department may be able to give in regard to forestry, to have their own and their pupils' interest excited, and thus by direct in-

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charged to obtain such information as may form a basis for intelligent action, and to exert, by the diffusion of accurate knowledge on the subject and otherwise, its influence in land- and to reform in the present method of using the forests and to secure their renewal.

This most desirable work, however, is only in a measure provided for by the appropriation given by Congress for the purpose. And the difficulty of obtaining accurate and reliable information as to actual conditions and needs is great.

Knowing that there is no body of men in the country, and classes more intelligent and more capable of doing this important work, any more interested in it, than the education of the coming generation, perceiving also that the best process of obtaining and diffusing information for which the Forestry Division was constituted and organized at one and the same time by the following plan, I would respectfully ask your consideration and support of the same.

It is proposed--

1st. To engage the force of its own workers your superintendence upon the establishment of facts in regard to forest areas, their distribution, utilization, etc., in their immediate precincts.

2nd. By thus directing their attention to the subject and supplying them with such information as the Department may be able to give in regard to forestry, to have their own and their pupils' interest excited, and thus by direct in-

fluences to arouse a desire to understand the questions involved.

It is not proposed to introduce a new branch into the course of studies, but simply to create a moral sentiment which will do its share in enlarging the views of those soon to become citizens.

Nor is it believed that such work, properly laid out and directed from here, will involve much time or undue attention on the part of the teachers, but while bringing them into sympathy with a national undertaking will afford them not only pastime and recreation but with the consciousness of performing an important duty of citizenship.

Awaiting your favorable consideration of this plan,

Respectfully,

B. E. Fernow,

Chief of Division.

